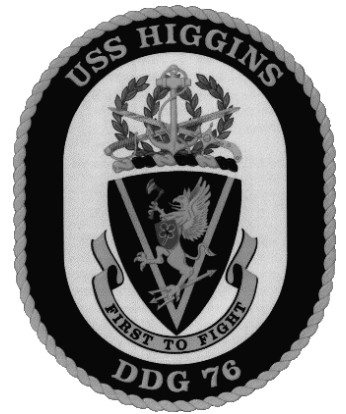


HIGGINS HERALD

ISSUE 5, VOL 2
JUNE 06



Busy Winter and Spring for HIGGINS Crew

The men and women of USS HIGGINS have worked non-stop since the holiday stand down and the New Year. From port visits to Mexico, to training cycle preparations and certifications the crew made significant headway in the new training cycle.

As well, the good ship HIGGINS welcomed new crew members and said goodbye to others. The ship celebrated its 7th Birthday and even participated in some athletic competitions. This issue highlights just some of these exciting events. The summer is shaping up to be just as eventful and successful.



USS HIGGINS in San Diego Bay, May 2006.



USS HIGGINS with the San Diego skyline in the background, April 2006.

Hail and Farewell

As HIGGINS began the New Year, it underwent a major turnover in personnel. Among one of the biggest changes was the departure of Command Master Chief Handley and the arrival of Command Master Chief Shores. We would like to take this opportunity to say farewell and thank you to CMC Handley for all her hard work and dedication to the crew. Fair Winds and Following Seas as you go to the USS TARAWA.

As we say goodbye we also say hello and welcome aboard Command Master Chief Shores. In a few short months he has already made a big impact and we look forward to many new and exciting things during his time on HIGGINS.



CMC Handley receives her HIGGINS picture



CMC Handley, piped off

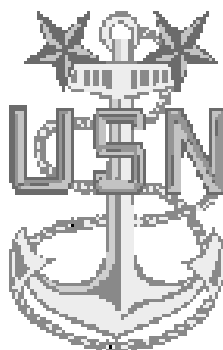


Commander Wilson welcoming and introducing CMC Shores to the crew



Meeting the crew for the first time

**Welcome
Aboard
Command
Master Chief
Shores**



CMC Shores addresses the crew

Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

First Port of Call in the New Year

Kicking off the New Year in style, HIGGINS headed down to Puerto Vallarta after the holiday stand down, making it our first port of call since returning home from deployment. Beautiful beaches and friendly locals welcomed the crew with open arms.

Although it was a short visit, it was a wonderful place to relax in preparation for the upcoming training cycle. The good food, shopping and nightlife were enjoyed by all ensuring that it would not be a trip soon forgotten.



Puerto Vallarta COMREL team



LT Smith and ENS Ditiangkin worked up an appetite painting the orphanage



Chiefs Mess at the Anderson Ranch



Commander Wilson presents the Husbanding agent with a HIGGINS plaque



LT Thornhill and ENS Slye enjoy a leisurely horseback ride through the ranch.

Burials at Sea

HIGGINS had the honor of laying to rest departed service members who requested a burial at sea.



Gun Salute



HMC Garrett presents the American flag.



The Chaplain interns the ashes to the deep.



The CO prepares the flag

USNA Class of 1976 Leadership Award



Each year the U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1976 presents a leadership award to a junior officer and chief who are selected by their peers who represent what it means to be a leader. This year the recipients were LTJG Hennenfent and GSEC(SW) Ramos.



Lieutenant Junior Grade Nicholas Hennenfent United States Naval Reserve

LTJG Hennenfent is originally from Bismarck, North Dakota. After high school, he attended the U.S. Naval Academy where he earned a B.S. in Electrical Engineering. He played for the Academy hockey team for four years and was commissioned as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy after graduation.

LTJG Hennenfent reported aboard USS JOHN PAUL JONES as Repair Division Officer, and, after a Sea Swap hull custody transfer to USS HIGGINS, he served as Main Propulsion Officer, Electrical Officer, and Chief Engineer.

LTJG Hennenfent currently serves as the ship's Navigator and Non-Compliant Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) Team Officer in Charge.

LTJG Hennenfent has been awarded several campaign ribbons.

Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Electrical) (Surface Warfare) Ronaldo Ramos United States Navy

GSEC(SW) Ronaldo Ramos is a native of Manila, Phillipines. After enlisting in the Navy and completing recruit training in Great Lakes, Illinois, he graduated from Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Electrical) "A" school and then reported to his first ship, USS VINCENNES (CG 49), in San Diego, California. His subsequent sea duty stations include USS HEWITT (DD 966), USS ELLIOT (DDG 967), USS FLETCHER (DD 992). Chief Ramos has attended numerous service schools, including Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Electrical) "C" School. He is qualified in all Engineering Watch Stations including Engineering Officer of the Watch.

Throughout his career he has been awarded five Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medals, as well as numerous unit and campaign ribbons.

Assessment Mania!

The San Diego winter months were busy for the men and women of USS Higgins as the ship received in-depth assessments from the Afloat Training Group Pacific in the areas of Combat Systems, Engineering and Force Protection. The underways brought onboard dozens of assessors and the whole crew found itself playing at their "A" game for the whole week. The hard work paid off with Higgins being the first ship on the waterfront to score 15 out of 15, a perfect score, in the Force Protection Assessment. ULTRA-C and ULTRA-E brought certifications that drastically reduced the workload for the upcoming training cycle.



OS3 Butler at the TDSS console during ULTRA C



BM3 Ryan Brazel driving the RHIB to pick up ATG Assessors at Fleet ASW Base



The Chief Engineer, LT Cowan, often imitated, never duplicated!



GSE2 Dorsey closely monitors the EPCC during an engineering evolution.

HIGGINS wins DESRON 23's

Softball Championship.

The HIGGINS Softball Team is preparing for a big season this summer. With more than a century of softball experience stacked on the roster, the ball team from Higgins is set for a season of fly balls, base hits, and runs for the home team. HIGGINS took on the PINCKNEY at DESRON 23's Surface Line Week championship softball game, winning soundly with a final score of 13-7. Check the POD for upcoming games!

Softball



OSCS Magneta with a good lead for 3rd base



BM2 Garrett pitching a four inning no-hitter.



EN2 Brett Harrod belts one into left field late in the fifth inning.

DESRON 23 Surface Line Week

The Destroyer Squadron 23 Surface Line week brought five days of competition that included damage control, navigation and ship handling, sports competitions and a fantastic picnic on Friday. Some crew ended up in the dunk tank, and some on the soft ball field, but great fun was had by all.



Sumo Wrestling anyone?



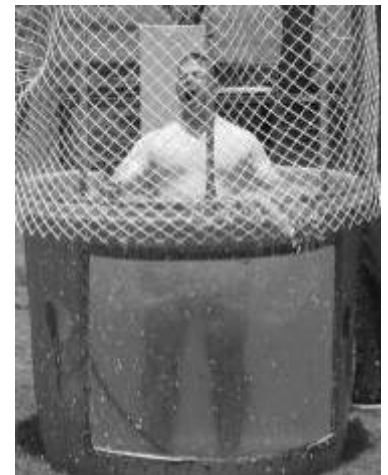
DCC Phillips takes the plunge after DCA nailed the booth with a fastball.



ET3 Kolkin with a base hit.

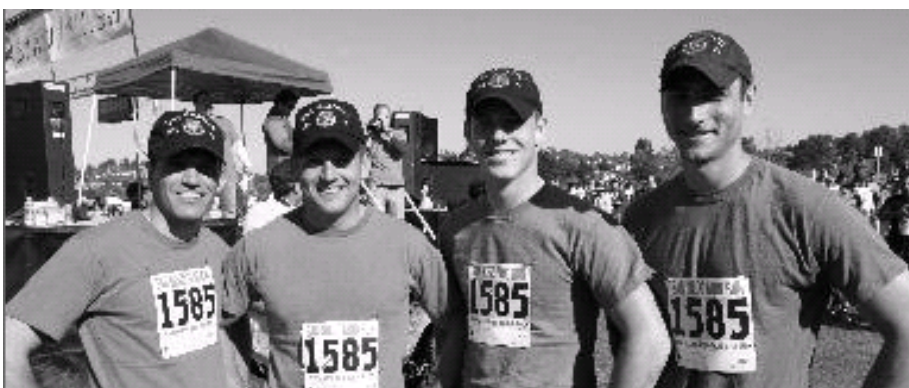


DCFN Moore, ITC Knox, & OS2 Jones enjoy the fine picnic cuisine.



XO: "I love cold water!!!"

Higgins Team Sweeps San Diego Mud Run



Higgins Very Own PT Studs

On Saturday April 8th, San Diegans of all shapes and sizes raced in the San Diego Mud Run in Rancho San Diego. This was the inaugural year, which attracted more than 1000 racers. A team from the Higgins was put together literally during the "rev" watch the night before and showed up ready to race at 0800. For 3.2 miles the team sloshed through mud pits, clambered over obstacles and pushed each other up a hilly course. During the race they steadily passed other racers but the finish line seems a little too quiet when they crossed. It turns out they finished second overall and first place in the military division. The hard corps runners were LT(j.g.) Nick Hennenfent, ENS Robert Inman, ENS Rick Slye, and BMSN Seaton Young.

Retirements

With every new sailor entering the Navy another will leave. This year two dedicated men left the Navy's service after 20 years to start a new chapter in their lives. Engineman First Class Ferguson and Perez celebrated their departure with a double retirement ceremony that was full of sentiment and grace. Fair Winds and Following Seas shipmates!



EN1 Ferguson and EN1 Perez receiving their flag after the passing through the ranks



EN1 Perez and EN1 Ferguson with their spouses, being thanked by the Captain for their dedication



EN1 Ferguson slicing his retirement cake with the CO and Chaplain Downing.



EN1 Perez, ENC Nunnally, Cmdr Wilson, CAPT Downing and EN1 Ferguson stand at attention.



EN1 Ferguson being piped off



EN1 Perez being piped off



EN1 Perez being awarded a Navy Achievement Medal.



Captain's Corner

HIGGINS Family and Friends,

The 2005 Arabian Gulf/Western Pacific deployment is well behind us now, and the Cruisebook Team of LTjg Nick Hennenfent (also the Destroyer Squadron Twenty Three Junior Officer Shiphandler of the Year) and Fire Controlman Second Class Kenneth Lopez did a remarkable job of capturing the six month journey in an all-color cruisebook that we will all cherish for years to come. The arrival of the cruisebook also signals the arrival of the myriad of inspections teams that will be climbing all over the ship to ensure we're prepared when our number is called again. Thus far, the crew has shown no sign of warfighting atrophy as they have excelled and distinguished themselves on the waterfront as the team to emulate in the area of training and readiness. Most notably in the area of force protection, the crew went 15 for 15 in their drills, and the Engineers posted the highest score on the waterfront at that time during their Engineering Operational Certification.

So far this year however, it has not been all work and inspections. Shortly after the return from the Christmas holiday stand-down, the ship enjoyed a port visit to the beautiful port of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Since day one, when I spoke with the sailors onboard the ship and asked them "what could we do better?", a large majority of them responded with "Captain, can we get down to Mexico for a port visit?" After speaking with the Operations Officer, he made the necessary arrangements and rest is history. The crew thoroughly enjoyed themselves in the land that was made famous by Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton during the filming of the movie "The Night of the Iguana". It is a truly beautiful place, and as demonstrated by many tourists from Canada and the northern U.S., the place to be in January when winter strikes up north.

The downside of the Puerto Vallarta port visit was that we had to take time out to farewell our former Command Master Chief (CMC) Linda Handley. Linda was hand selected to take over as the new CMC onboard USS TARAWA (LHA-1). It is the next big step in her already impressive career, and she is more than ready for the task. We will miss her and her husband Daryl (a former CMC himself), as they have been invaluable in the support and guidance they have provided to the sailors of this command and to myself as the CO. Linda's last assignment here was to turn over her duties to capable hands, and she has done just that. CMC Chuck Shores is in the seat as the new HIGGINS CMC, and he reported aboard in a full sprint. He has already made a significant impact, and the leadership triad and the "goat locker" (Chief's Mess) remains strong...Welcome aboard!

There have been a few notable ceremonies related to HIGGINS during this period as well. First of all, we are all proud of our former Operations Officer, Ted Nunamaker, as he recently took command of the fastest ship in the Navy...USS SEA FIGHTER. The Navy chooses its CO's very carefully, and when they give them O-4 command, even more so. Ted is ready and will/is doing a fine job. Also, in a dual retirement ceremony onboard the ship, EN1 Benjamin Ferguson and EN1 Arnold Perez stood their last watch and departed for civilian life. The lead guest speaker was Captain Ulysses Downing (Naval Chaplain) and he, over a decade ago, baptized EN1 Ferguson in the Jordan River. It was fitting that he return and speak at his retirement.

Also HIGGINS' celebrated her 7th Birthday on April 24th which coincided with the presentation of the USNA Class of '76 Leadership Award which was presented by Mr. Nick Flacco to this year's award recipients, LTjg Hennenfent and GSEC Ronaldo Ramos. This award is special because the peers vote for their top leader in the wardroom and chief's mess.

Finally, many thanks to Capt(ret) Charlie Nelson (a former member of Arleigh Burke's original "Little Beavers" and Capt(ret) Tem Bugarin for their inspirational speeches during the DESRON 23 Surface Line Week and Asian Pacific American Heritage Month presentations, respectively. Your words of encouragement and enrichment will have long lasting effects on HIGGINS' sailors.

Last but not least, BZ! to the HIGGINS' NEWSLETTER team of ENS Tiana Tafua and ENS Rob Inman.

V/r,
Jesse Wilson